

For more information: Alison Eldridge  
(360) 753-7835 or [alisone@hecb.wa.gov](mailto:alisone@hecb.wa.gov)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 3, 2011**

**Washington awarded \$27 million to help students “GEAR UP” for college**

**OLYMPIA** – The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) has received a six-year, \$27 million grant to increase college readiness and success for 6,500 low-income students in 40 middle and high schools statewide.

The Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) grant, awarded by the U.S. Department of Education, will be administered by the HECB in partnership with the University of Washington, the College Success Foundation, Washington State Employees Credit Union, the Northwest Education Loan Association, and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. The Governor’s office designated the HECB to administer the program.

“Washington is very pleased and appreciative of this funding. Through this GEAR UP grant, more Washington low-income students will get the skills and support they need to make their dreams of a college education a reality,” Governor Chris Gregoire said.

Working in partnership with local school districts, GEAR UP provides tutoring, mentoring, college and career counseling, college visits, family activities, financial aid awareness, and other research-proven activities and services to help more students enroll and succeed in postsecondary programs. Washington State GEAR UP also provides professional development to teachers, counselors, and administrators to build program sustainability beyond the life of the grant.

“This grant is great news for Washington’s low-income students and their families,” said HECB Executive Director Don Bennett. “It will boost collaborations between K-12 and higher education institutions, provide support to schools through professional development opportunities and student services, and significantly increase the number of students prepared to enter and succeed in college.”

This is Washington’s third consecutive GEAR UP state grant. It was awarded after successful completion of a competitive application process. Of the 296 entities that applied for the program, only 66 were awarded grants.

According to a recent study of Washington State GEAR UP by the Social & Economic Sciences Research Center at Washington State University, 72 percent of the program’s high school graduates enrolled in higher education programs during their first year after high school, compared to the state average of 45 percent of students who receive free or reduced price lunches at school.

For more information on the GEAR UP program, visit [www.gearup.wa.gov](http://www.gearup.wa.gov).

###